

PRINTERS & SCANNERS

FAQ

Q What's the point of a network port/print server? Can't I just share a printer using a PC?

A While you can share most printers using Windows' network sharing, it means that you've always got to leave the PC with the printer connected turned on. This isn't just inconvenient, but it means that you're running a PC and paying for its electricity for more time than you need.

A printer with a built-in network connection, or a dedicated print server, is often a more practical way of sharing a printer in a home or a small office. You no longer need to have a PC turned on all the time and you're free to locate your printer in the most convenient position, not just next to a PC.

If you're planning to share a multifunction peripheral, though, check its manual carefully. You may find that you can't operate the scanner over your network connection. Even if you can, you may find that you're limited to scanning at lower resolutions. In these cases, you still need to hook your printer up to a PC.

David Bayon

Printers Correspondent

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HP LaserJet P2014

★★★★★

£167 inc VAT

When choosing a mono laser printer for your home or home office, you're faced with the dilemma of how much to spend. Many models can be picked up cheaply, but usually come with slower speeds and slightly higher costs per page. On the other hand, you can spend more initially and benefit from cheaper running costs, more features and faster speeds. HP's LaserJet P2014 sits firmly in the latter category.

As mono printers go the P2014 is expensive, but it has a lot going for it to justify that initial outlay. For a start it's very simple to set up: just slot the CD in the drive and follow the thorough step-by-step photos until all the safety tape is removed and your toner is correctly installed. Then you can load 250 sheets of paper into the main tray. There's also a useful flip-down tray on the front that holds 50 sheets and is ideal for envelopes and other types of paper. This means that you can load your printer with two types of paper, and simply select which you want to print to from the driver.

Then there's the print speed: HP quotes 23ppm for A4 and that's almost precisely what we achieved in our Normal speed test. Better still, it achieved this not only in economy mode, which produces pale text but is still perfectly legible, but also in normal 1,200dpi mode. There is simply no speed difference between any of the P2014's quality settings. You can now choose what quality to use based entirely on economic concerns, rather than having to worry about speed.

If you go for the best quality you'll be delighted with the results, as our text documents were crisp,



thick and had no visible spidering or roughness. The printer even did a reasonable job on our 6x4in test photographs, so you can rest assured that graphics and images will be reproduced to a satisfactory standard. The only slight annoyance is the lack of a progress window to keep track of jobs, so you've got no idea how busy the printer is.

The P2014 offers the choice of USB and parallel connections, so you'll be fine however old your PC is, and there are high-yield toner cartridges available to cut costs for heavy users. These give the P2014 a running cost of around 1.2p per page, which is up there with the best of them and really helps to offset some of the high price. So if you're looking for fast, high-quality prints at a decent price, you should consider paying a bit extra for the HP P2014, as the low cost per page will start paying you back almost straight away.

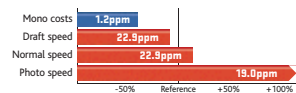
David Bayon

SUMMARY

- ✓ Very quick
- ✓ Low running costs
- ✗ Expensive to buy

MONO LASER PRINTER 1,200dpi resolution, USB Hi-Speed and parallel interfaces
PART CODE CB450A
SUPPLIER www.ameiva.co.uk
DETAILS www.hp.co.uk

PERFORMANCE (see page 62)



Also consider...

SAMSUNG ML-2510

★★★★★

£42 inc VAT



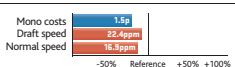
This grey laser printer may look a little drab, but

it's easy to set up and quick to install. It has a 250-sheet covered input tray and a single-sheet multipurpose feed slot, but it crumples envelopes.

The ML-2510 peaked at 22.7ppm when printing text, which is impressive for such an affordable printer. It's also cheap to run, with a cost per page of around 1.5p, yet produces high-quality text and mono graphics. It's a great compact budget mono laser printer.



MONO LASER PRINTER 1,200x600dpi resolution, 24ppm maximum speed, parallel and USB Hi-Speed interfaces
PART CODE ML-2510
SUPPLIER www.printerland.co.uk
DETAILS www.samsung.co.uk
✓ Fast; affordable to buy and run; good print quality
FULL REVIEW Oct 2006



EPSON Perfection V100 Photo

★★★★★

£60 inc VAT



The Perfection V100 is a bargain. It

can handle negatives and slides, as well as traditional printed materials. The TWAIN driver can break up a strip of negatives or 35mm slides into selectable thumbnails, so it's quick to get all your old media on to a PC.

Quality of scans for all media is excellent, and colours were reproduced faithfully. With a quick scan speed, too, it's almost perfect. If you're looking for good all-round scanning performance, this is the model to buy.



CCD FLATBED SCANNER 3,200x9,600dpi optical resolution, 48-bit colour output, USB Hi-Speed interface
PART CODE B11B184072
SUPPLIER www.currys.co.uk
DETAILS www.epson.co.uk
✓ Affordable; excellent quality
✗ Fiddly transparency adaptor
FULL REVIEW Sep 2007

LEXMARK X9350

★★★★

£149 inc VAT

Last month we saw Lexmark's first wireless inkjet printer – an attempt to bring the technology to the masses at a very low price – but this MFP is a far more serious proposition. The X9350 has the same wireless capability as the Z1420 but puts it in a top-end, sturdy multifunction device, with a superior print engine and EverColor 2 inks.

Setup is every bit as simple as with the entry-level printer, with a step-by-step guide to everything from removing it from the box right up to setting up the wireless connection. You'll initially need to use the supplied USB cable to get your network up and running, but once it's working you can put that away and print quickly and simply from anywhere in your home or office. The wireless logo on the front glows green when connected, but also changes to orange to let you know about any problems.

We didn't notice any lag due to the lack of cabling, but the X9350 is not a particularly fast printer. We got just over 6ppm at normal quality, and text appeared clear and sharp, although not quite as good as from the best printers around. Draft is much quicker and the quality isn't too bad, so for quick runoffs you should be happy with a speed of 16.2ppm, even if it is nowhere near the claimed 32ppm.

Photos are a mixed bag, though. The X9350 uses Lexmark's EverColor 2 ink, which is a huge

improvement over the standard inks of the Z1420 and resulted in photos with vivid colours and bright tones. We couldn't help but notice a little too much magenta in most pictures, but as this is an office MFP this shouldn't be a deal-breaker. However, while the quality of photos may be pretty good, the speed leaves a lot to be desired: each print takes around two-and-a-half minutes, and a further minute or so to become dry to the touch. The slow speed could make the X9350 the bottleneck in a busy small office and lead to frustration. You'll also need to make sure that you use the main tray, as the quick-feed slot continually failed to load our paper straight. This could become expensive after several binned attempts.

The control panel and number pad make controlling the fax component of the X9350 relatively easy, especially thanks to the 2½in screen, but you'll need to hang on to the doorstop-thick manual to navigate through the myriad of menus and options. There's a 50-sheet document feeder on top of the printer to make faxing or copying long documents a doddle, but the scanner is not particularly quick. It took 36 seconds to scan an A4 document at 300dpi.



The scan quality is also only average, with a slight lack of focus in detailed areas meaning images aren't as sharp as those from the best scanners. We also saw, just as with the prints, too much magenta in our scanned images, although this can obviously be tweaked afterwards. The scan driver is a bit simplistic in the Basic view, so it would be helpful to be able to set the Advanced view as the default, rather than having to select it every time you need to scan. Again, this is another case where the printer is slow to use, which could cause problems in an office.

The X9350 takes high yield cartridges, and there's a separate photo cartridge, too. The cost per page of 6.3p is reasonable enough, and the £149 purchase price is also not too bad for an office-focused device with fax. The X9350 is a good all-round device that doesn't really excel in any particular area; whether that makes it a good deal for you depends on how useful its wireless capability is, as there are better MFPs around, such as Canon's PIXMA MP510 (see 'Also consider...' below), if wireless printing doesn't catch your eye.

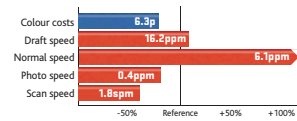
David Bayon

SUMMARY

- ✓ Wireless printing
- ✓ Automatic document feeder
- ✗ Fairly slow

COLOUR INKJET MFP Four/six-colour inkjet, 4,800x1,200dpi print and scan resolution, USB Hi-Speed, 802.11g wireless and Ethernet interfaces
PART CODE 0080D2819
SUPPLIER www.pcworld.co.uk
DETAILS www.lexmark.co.uk

PERFORMANCE (see page 62)



CANON PIXMA MP510

★★★★★

£68 inc VAT



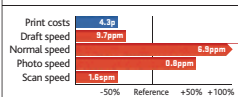
The MP510 has excellent print quality,

particularly when reproducing text documents, but it's also quick and cheap to print. The scanner isn't quite as good as the printer, but it's good enough for occasional jobs.

The MP510 was the fastest MFP for photo printing in our recent Labs test, and is great value.



COLOUR INKJET MFP 4,800x1,200dpi print resolution, 25ppm mono/17ppm colour maximum speed, 1,200x2,400dpi scan resolution, USB Hi-Speed, PictBridge USB, IrDA infrared interfaces
PART CODE 1450B019AA
SUPPLIER www.pixmania.co.uk
DETAILS www.canon.co.uk
✓ Superb text quality; low running costs
✗ Scans are slightly soft
FULL REVIEW Aug 2007



KONICA MINOLTA Magicolor 2500W

★★★★★

£171 inc VAT

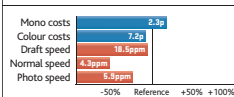


The Magicolor 2500W is one of the cheapest colour laser printers, but it gets the essentials right.

It's compact, easy to set up and use, and produces good-quality prints. With basic paper handling and no scope for upgrades, it isn't suitable for demanding users, but home users will find it great value.



COLOUR LASER PRINTER 600x600dpi resolution, 20ppm mono/5ppm colour maximum speed, USB Hi-Speed interface
PART CODE A00V021
SUPPLIER www.printerbase.co.uk
DETAILS www.konicaminolta.com
✓ Affordable, good print quality
✗ Basic paper handling
FULL REVIEW May 2007



HP Photosmart D7160

★★★★★

£78 inc VAT

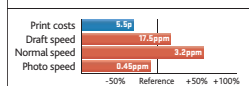


HP's Photosmart D7160 costs less now than it did when it won our Best Buy award. It doesn't produce the best photo quality we've seen, but it's fast, affordable and easy to use. It's equally happy reeling off A4 pages of high-quality text or printing photos directly from a memory card.

We don't think it's worth paying extra for the touch-screen-equipped D7360 when the D7160 is this good.



A4 PHOTO INKJET Six-colour inkjet, 4,800x1,200dpi resolution, USB Hi-Speed and PictBridge USB interfaces
PART CODE Q7047B
SUPPLIER www.pixmania.co.uk
DETAILS www.hp.co.uk
✓ Cheap to buy and run; easy to use
FULL REVIEW Jan 2007



CANON Selphy CP740

★★★★
£67 inc VAT

If you take a lot of photos it can be a real hassle getting them developed, and not everyone wants a big A4 printer taking up space in the home. For many people the answer is a dedicated 6x4in photo printer, which is compact, economical and extremely simple to use. Canon's Selphy CP740 is the latest to be released. It has a very Apple-like style with its white finish and recessed 2in screen.

The point of these printers is to take the PC out of the equation by pairing up directly with your camera, and to this end you get media slots for Memory Stick, CompactFlash and SD cards, but sadly no support for xD. If you pull out the discreetly placed rubber stopper on the front, the CP740 also has a retractable mini-USB cable to plug into your camera, so you can print using PictBridge directly and never have to worry about losing your camera's cable again. A standard USB port completes the set should you wish to hook it up to your PC. This is useful if you want to edit your images before printing them or want to print any old photos stored on your computer.

The paper tray sticks out of the front, so it's not quite as stylish as it first appears, but it can be removed when not printing. As there are three dye-sub colours and one gloss tank, the paper is pulled back and forth through the printer once for each coat, and the image gradually builds to a recognisable picture. You need to leave six inches free behind the printer for this process to work and to avoid jams.



You can choose borderless prints and red-eye removal, and the print quality was reasonable in our tests. Colours were pretty accurate on the whole, but different tones didn't blend too cleanly and photos came out a little too dark at default settings. Nonetheless, the contrast was impressive and pictures were pleasantly vibrant. Each 6x4in print will take around one minute and 20 seconds to appear, so it's not a slow printer.

In the box you'll find a starter ink and paper pack. As per usual with starter kits, it prints only a measly five photos, but you can get a 108-picture pack of ink and photo paper for just £23 from www.expansys.com. This works out at 22p per photo, which is nowhere near as good as a photo

service such as www.photobox.com but certainly beats most A4 photo inkjets for economy. It's also not a bad price if you want to print out only a couple of pictures rather than all your holiday snaps.

All-round, then, Canon's Selphy CP740 isn't a bad printer. It's incredibly simple to use and has little maintenance. Print quality is good, making this a decent, if unspectacular, choice.

David Bayon

SUMMARY

- ✓ Very simple to use; nice screen
- ✓ Fairly quick prints
- ✗ Poor colour blending

PHOTO PRINTER Three-colour dye-sub, 300dpi resolution, USB Hi-Speed interface
PART CODE 2094B008AA
SUPPLIER www.morecomputers.com
DETAILS www.canon.co.uk

PERFORMANCE (see page 62)



CHOOSING A... Laser Printer

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

RESOLUTION: 1,200x600dpi
MEMORY: 8MB
SPEED: 24ppm
INTERFACES: USB
PAGES PER MONTH: 5,000
PAPER TRAYS: 150-sheet A4
OPTIONS:

Recommended minimum in grey

- 1** Prices for A4 laser printers with specifications such as those above start at around £45. These models are fine for users who print less than one packet (500 pages) of paper a month. Look for good print quality, flexible drivers and running costs of below 2p per page. Ideally, it should hold paper clean and flat in a horizontal tray and allow manual feeding of headed paper and envelopes with no creasing.
- 2** You'll have to spend more for a printer with the build quality and speed to cope with a heavy workload. Heavy users or small workgroups need up to 25 pages per minute (ppm), and whole departments need more. Bulk printing demands costs of 1p per page or less.
- 3** Colour lasers are available for less than £200, but at this price you'll get a four-pass model that will print colour far slower than mono. If colour speed is important, consider spending £400 or more on a faster single-pass model.

4 Support for a printer language such as Printer Control Language (PCL) 6 or PostScript 3 means you can use the printer with any computer and even some PDAs.

5 Not all lasers print graphics well, but a 1,200dpi resolution helps. Colour lasers can often print high-quality graphics, but should have at least 32MB of memory.

6 A network adaptor allows you to connect a printer to an Ethernet network, so all the network users can print to it directly. Smaller groups can use a PC to host and share any printer using Windows' File and Print Sharing Wizard.

7 Duplex printing is an increasingly affordable option and lets you print on both sides of a sheet of paper automatically. A scanner/fax unit turns your printer into a multifunction peripheral. Large groups should get multiple paper trays to deal with headed paper and other stationery.

Also consider...

CANON PIXMA iP4300

★★★★★
£55 inc VAT

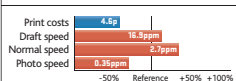


If you need a budget printer, Canon's PIXMA iP4300 shows that you don't need to compromise on quality. It has two paper trays, and can print on coated CDs or both sides of each sheet

of paper. It's fast to produce text, colour graphics and photos. Print quality is high, with no trace of grain, though photos are a little bit oversaturated. Best of all, it has very low running costs.



INKJET PRINTER Five-colour inkjet, 9,600x2,400dpi maximum resolution, USB and PictBridge USB interfaces
PART CODE 1438B008AA
SUPPLIER www.ebuyer.com
DETAILS www.canon.co.uk
 ✓ Inexpensive; fast; flexible; stylish; high-quality results
FULL REVIEW Dec 2006



CANON PIXMA MP160

★★★★★
£42 inc VAT



The PIXMA MP160 costs less than many budget inkjet printers, and it can also make good-quality scans and copies. It's compact and attractive and not too tricky to set up. Unusually for such an affordable printer, it has low running costs if you use Canon's high-capacity ink cartridges. It's great value if you just want a basic multifunction peripheral.



FOUR-COLOUR INKJET MFP 4,800x1,200dpi print resolution, 600x1,200dpi scan resolution, USB Hi-Speed and PictBridge USB interfaces
PART CODE 1447B008AA
SUPPLIER www.morecomputers.com
co.uk DETAILS www.canon.co.uk
 ✓ Affordable; good results
 ✗ No card reader
FULL REVIEW Jan 2007

